

# COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

A toolkit to help build awareness about Underwater Georgia and help families who owe more than their homes are worth.

**Important Dates to Know:**

September 28: Program opens for pre-applications

October 18: Program closes

**[underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org)**

  
**Georgia** Department of  
**Community Affairs**

Access electronic versions of  
these assets at LINK

[www.dca.ga.gov/underwatergeorgia](http://www.dca.ga.gov/underwatergeorgia)



# OWE MORE ON YOUR MORTGAGE THAN YOUR HOME IS WORTH?

A new, limited-time, federally funded initiative may be able to help.

Underwater Georgia is a new federally funded state program for Georgia homeowners who owe more money on their mortgage than their home is worth. **For eligible applicants, the program may be able to provide a one-time payment of up to \$50,000 to the mortgage lender to reduce the principal balance on the home. To qualify, a homeowner must file a pre-application by October 18, 2016.**

## To qualify

- The property must be your primary residence (and only home) and purchased prior to January 1, 2012.
- The total amount owed on all mortgages on the home must be \$250,000 or less and mortgage payments have to be less than 90 days past due.
- Total **gross household income** must not exceed 140 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).
- The property must have a total **loan to value (LTV) ratio** of at least 110 percent.
- You cannot have received assistance previously through HomeSafe Georgia.

## To apply

- **Visit [underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org).** There, you can review full program requirements and complete a pre-qualification quiz, which will help you determine whether you are likely to qualify.
- **Submit a pre-application by October 18, which asks for your contact information and details including when you purchased your home, its value and mortgage balance and more.**
- A random selection process via a third party will be conducted among pre-applications submitted. Representatives from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs will contact homeowners selected and work with them directly to complete a full application, which also includes submitting supporting documentation.

**[underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org)**

**Toll free at 1-877-519-4443**  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**[underwatergeorgia@dca.ga.gov](mailto:underwatergeorgia@dca.ga.gov)**

REPRESENTANTES DE HABLA HISPANA ESTÁN DISPONIBLE.



## Email/E-newsletter Content

### **Don't drown in your mortgage**

Do you owe more on your mortgage than your home is worth? A new, limited-time, federally-funded state initiative called Underwater Georgia ([www.underwatergeorgia.org](http://www.underwatergeorgia.org)) may be able to help.

For eligible applicants, Underwater Georgia may be able to provide a one-time payment of up to \$50,000 to reduce the principal balance on your home.

From now until Oct. 18, visit [underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org) to determine if you may qualify and begin a pre-application. Because demand for the program is expected to far surpass total resources available, Underwater Georgia will operate through a random third-party selection process. Once funds have been exhausted, the program will close.

To qualify, homeowners must meet several criteria about how long they've owned the home, total mortgage balance and loan to value ratio, total household income and assets, and other factors. Applicants cannot have previously received assistance through HomeSafe Georgia.

Don't miss this limited-time opportunity to see if you qualify. Visit [underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org) today.

### E-Blast



**ACT BY  
OCT. 18!**

**DO YOU OWE MORE ON  
YOUR MORTGAGE THAN  
YOUR HOME IS WORTH?**

A limited-time federally funded, state government program may be able to help.

Don't miss out! Visit our website today.  
[underwatergeorgia.com](http://underwatergeorgia.com)

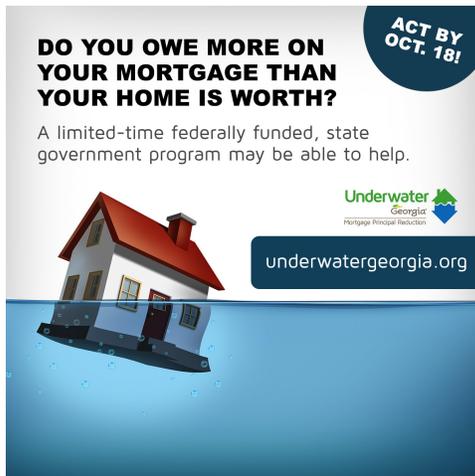
## Sample Social Media Posts

### Facebook

Sample Facebook posts

- Owe more than your home is worth? You may be eligible for Underwater Georgia. Find out more and act by Oct. 18. [underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org)
- Don't drown in your mortgage. Find out how Underwater Georgia can help and act by Oct. 18. [underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org)
- Are you or someone you know struggling with mortgage payments? This limited-time, federally funded initiative could help. Learn more and act by Oct. 18. [underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org).

Sample images to include with Facebook posts:





## Twitter

### Sample tweets

- Struggling with #mortgage payments? You may be eligible for #UnderwaterGA. Act by 10/18. [underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org)
- Don't drown in your #mortgage. Find out how #UnderwaterGA can help and act by 10/18. [underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org)
- Owe more than your home is worth? Learn more about #UnderwaterGA & act by 10/18. [underwatergeorgia.org](http://underwatergeorgia.org)

Sample images to include with tweets:



## Images

Reminder for images:

- All images should be appropriately sized to the recommended specs
  - **Facebook:** 1200X628 pixels
  - **Twitter:** 1200x675 pixels

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How do I apply for assistance?

Submit a pre-application through [www.UnderwaterGeorgia.org](http://www.UnderwaterGeorgia.org) between September 28, 2016 and October 18, 2016. Pre-applications will be assigned a number, which will be sent to a third party for a blind random selection process. Next, the randomly selected applications will be reviewed, in the order selected, for eligibility and a Customer Service representative will contact those deemed eligible and work with you to complete a full application.

### 2. Why does Underwater Georgia have a two-step application process?

Funds for the program are extremely limited, and we expect a great deal of interest. For that reason, a random selection process will be used to determine the order in which the pre-applications will be reviewed for eligibility. Once funds are exhausted, we will stop reviewing pre-applications and the program will close.

### 3. How can I get help to submit the Underwater Georgia pre-application?

Customer Service representatives can assist you in submitting the pre-application during the open submission period. If you have questions or need translation help, please contact us toll free at 1-877-519-4443.

- If you need computer access, visit your local library, Department of Labor Career Center or a Goodwill Career Center.
- An email address is required to submit a pre-application. If you do not have an email address, you can set up a free account at [www.mail.google.com](http://www.mail.google.com) or [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com).

### 4. I submitted a pre-application but I'm not sure it went through. What do I do?

Once you complete the pre-application and click "submit," you will receive a confirmation number on the screen. If you see this screen with your number, your application was successfully submitted. You should also receive a confirmation by email at the email address you provided. (Check your email account to see if you received the email confirmation.) If you do not see the confirmation in your in-box, check your "spam" filter in case the email was routed there. If you still do not see the confirmation in your email, you can contact us at 1-877-519-4443 to confirm receipt. It is important that you confirm your pre-application was submitted. Once the submission period has ended, we will no longer accept pre-applications.

*Please note: If you submit more than one pre-application, only the first submission will be considered in the random selection process.*

### 5. How many times can I submit a pre-application?

Once. Duplicate applications from the same applicant, or from multiple applicants for the same address, will be removed from consideration.

**6. What happens if I forget my pre-application number?**

The pre-application number is confirmation that your pre-application was received. It is not necessary to have this number to go through the application process. Once we complete the random selection process, we will contact you.

**7. What if I need to make changes to my pre-application?**

If you need to make changes to the contact information provided in your pre-application, please call us toll free at 1-877-519-4443. Any other changes to your pre-application (such as loan amount, income, etc.) can be made if and when you are selected to complete the application process.

**8. After I submit my pre-application, what happens next?**

All applications will be assigned a number, which will be sent to a third party for a blind random selection process. Next, the randomly selected applications will be reviewed, in the order selected, for eligibility and those deemed eligible will continue through the process. Since we expect to receive more applications than we have funding for, not all eligible applicants will receive assistance.

If your pre-application comes up for consideration, a representative will contact you to review the information provided in your pre-application and request additional information. We will contact you by phone, email, and regular mail. At that time, if there appear to be no disqualifying factors, you will be sent instructions on how to complete the application package. Supporting documents will be required with the application package.

As an applicant, you must respond to inquiries promptly to prevent the pre-application from being withdrawn.

**9. So, what should I do in the meantime?**

The application process will take several months, so we ask that you:

- Check announcements on the home page at [www.underwatergeorgia.org](http://www.underwatergeorgia.org) for program status updates.
- Check your email (and spam filter) for information from representatives at DCA. If your application is up for review, we will contact you by phone, email, and regular mail.
- Continue to pay your mortgage and keep payments current.

**10. How do you determine if I am eligible?**

If your pre-application is selected, we will need documentation of eligibility, and each applicant/property/mortgage must meet all eligibility requirements. Some of the requirements are listed below. Additional criteria apply. The term “applicant” refers to homeowners, borrowers and spouse (if applicable).

- **Primary residence.** This is the home where the applicant lives, is the home to be considered for assistance, and proof of residency is easily documented. For Underwater Georgia, no applicant can own other residential property. *(Please note: Quit claim deeds executed after September 1, 2016, may affect eligibility.)*
- **Liquid assets.** Applicants may not have more in liquid assets than the amount of assistance. Liquid assets are funds in all financial accounts (bank, credit union, and money market, etc.) except those restricted by IRA, 401(K), or other similar requirements. Early retirement distributions (not required distributions) and tax refunds are excluded from liquid asset maximums.
- **Total mortgage balance.** The outstanding mortgage balance on the home cannot exceed \$250,000. We consider the unpaid mortgage balance on all loans (first mortgage, second mortgage, home equity line of credit, etc.) on the home to determine the total mortgage balance. Charged off lien totals are not included

in the mortgage balance.

- **Current on tax filings.** You must have submitted your most recent tax return to the IRS, if required. Tax transcripts will be used as a source of income documentation. Tax returns are not accepted to document income.
- **Tax liens.** You cannot have more than \$10,000 in tax liens total against you personally or attached to the property. If tax liens are \$10,000 or less, an active payment plan must already be in place for all tax liens; documentation will be required.
- **Income.** This program has income limits. The total annual gross household income must be able to support the mortgage payment but not exceed the averaged 140% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Click [here](#) for AMI data by county. The income of co-homeowners and co-borrowers/co-signers not residing in the home may be excluded with proof of other verifiable residency subject to state requirements.
- **Satisfactory mortgage payment history.** This program was created to help homeowners who can afford their mortgage and have been making payments, but whose home is significantly underwater. You cannot be more than two payments delinquent at the time of application or closing. Any mortgage that is delinquent will require an explanation and documentation for the delinquency and income will be reviewed for affordability.
- **Underwater (negative equity).** Being “underwater” means the amount you owe on your mortgage is more than the current value of the property. We will use third party data to determine the LTV. Underwater Georgia is targeted to homeowners who have a LTV of at least 110 percent.
- **Bankruptcy.** To qualify, you cannot be in an active bankruptcy — regardless of the type of bankruptcy filed or if the home was included as part of the bankruptcy. Applicants with a recently dismissed and/or discharged bankruptcy may be required to provide dismissal or discharge papers.
- **Legal resident.** You must be legal resident(s) of the United States. A Residency Affidavit will be required.
- **No previous HomeSafe Georgia assistance received.** HomeSafe Georgia assistance is only available one time, regardless of the amount of assistance received or the program under which it was received.
- **Other underwriting criteria apply.**

#### 11. What if I’m behind on my mortgage?

You cannot be more than two payments behind or past due on your mortgage(s) at any time from application to closing.

*Please note: If you are behind on your mortgage payment due to unemployment, underemployment, military service, medical issue, disability, death, divorce, or permanent loss of income within the last four years, you may be eligible for one of HomeSafe Georgia’s other programs. Please review the programs at [www.HomeSafeGeorgia.com](http://www.HomeSafeGeorgia.com).*

**12. How is assistance provided, and do I have to pay it back?**

After closing, a one-time payment will be made to your lender/servicer on your behalf. The funds will be used to reduce your principal balance, usually on the first mortgage. The funds will be provided as an interest-free loan. A subordinate lien will be placed on the home, for which the balance will be forgiven at 20% each year. After 5 years, the lien will be cancelled. If you sell your home before the lien is cancelled and you have equity in the home, you will have to repay the portion of the loan that is outstanding. If you sell your home before the lien is cancelled and there is no equity in the home, we will not require repayment. HomeSafe Georgia will subordinate to a “no cash out” refinance.

**13. Can I submit a pre-application for the Underwater Georgia program and an application for another HomeSafe Georgia program at the same time?**

Some programs’ hardship requirements would indicate ineligibility for the Underwater Georgia program. If you might be eligible for both the Underwater Georgia program and another HomeSafe Georgia program, understand first, these have different submission requirements, and second, that assistance can only be offered once regardless of the amount of assistance provided or the program under which it was provided. If approved for any program, you would have to decide whether or not to accept the assistance and close within 30 days, as the approval would not be held open waiting on the decision for the other program.

**14. I was denied assistance under other HomeSafe Georgia programs. Can I apply for the Underwater Georgia program?**

Yes, you are eligible to submit a pre-application for Underwater Georgia.

**15. I was denied Underwater Georgia program assistance. Can I dispute the denial?**

If you believe the denial was issued in error, you must dispute the decision in writing (proof of delivery is suggested) by providing an explanation with supporting documentation within 30 calendar days of the date of the Statement of Ineligibility or Denial. (If the 30<sup>th</sup> day falls on a weekend or holiday, the next business day.)

**16. What if my pre-application or application was withdrawn?**

If your application is withdrawn, you may contact us in writing within 30 days of the withdrawal date (proof of delivery is suggested), providing documentation for the extenuating circumstance that prevented you from responding in a timely manner. If approved for reopening, the application process must be concluded without any additional delays. Once the 30 days from withdrawal has passed, or when funds are no longer available, whichever is first, the pre-application or application will not be reopened.

**Have other questions or need help?**

*Customer Service representatives will be available 24 hours a day to take your call during the pre-application submission period.*

- Phone (toll free): 1-877-519-4443
- Para asistencia en Español, presiene (4) cuatro
- TDD/TYY Line 404-679-4915, or toll free 1-877-204-1194
- Email: [underwatergeorgia@dca.ga.gov](mailto:underwatergeorgia@dca.ga.gov)